

Rowe Board of Selectmen Meeting
March 13, 2020
4:30 P.M.
Rowe Town Hall – Meeting Room 1

Board of Selectmen: Chair Charles Sokol, Selectman Ed Silva
Absent: Vice-Chair Jennifer Morse
Administrative Staff: Paul McLatchy III, Administrative Assistant to the Boards
Other Attendees: Fire Chief Dennis Annear, Town Nurse Sheila Litchfield, Park Commissioner Laurie Pike, Board of Health Chair Margaret Rice, Board of Health Clerk Joanne Semanie, Police Chief Julie Shippee, Camp and Conference Center Director Ben Werner
Audience of Citizens: Susan Gleason, Christopher “Selmi” Hyytinen (entered at 6:22)

Call to Order: Chair Sokol called the meeting to order at 4:29 P.M., a quorum of the board present.

Broadband Loan: The paperwork for rolling the broadband loans over for another year was signed by both members. This will be given to the treasurer to process.

Capital Stabilization: The Board needs to vote to raise an amount for the annual capital stabilization override. A 2.5% increase over last year’s amount would be \$206,775.

MOTION: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to set the Capital Stabilization override amount at \$206,775. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

Map Maintenance Contract: A contract for map maintenance was presented to the Board by the Assessors.

MOTION TO SIGN: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to agree to and sign the tax map maintenance proposal with CAI technologies. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

FRCOG MVP Contract: The Board was asked to sign a contract with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to serve as the project manager for the town’s Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program planning process.

MOTION TO SIGN: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to agree and sign the agreement between Rowe and FRCOG. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

Recycled Product Purchasing Policy: The Board reviewed the Recycled Product Purchasing Policy.

MOTION TO SIGN: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to accept and sign the Recycling Product Purchasing Policy. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

FRCOG Fuel Bid: A proposal was made by FRCOG to handle the bidding process for fuel for the coming year. This has been done in years past.

MOTION TO SIGN: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to accept and sign the collective bidding agreement with FRCOG. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

State Compactor Grant: The state has awarded a grant for a paper compactor at the refuse garden.

MOTION TO SIGN: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to approve and sign the grant paperwork for a paper compactor. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Chair Sokol and Mr. McLatchy met with Board of Health Chair Maggie Rice, Board of Health Clerk Joanne Semanie, and Town Nurse Sheila Litchfield prior to this meeting to listen to a state telecom and discuss possible town response to the COVID-19 situation. Chair Sokol educated the group and stated that there is an ongoing issue, and that social distancing practices may be prudent and appropriate for town departments.

Chair Rice explained that the goal of the Board of Health is to slow the progression of the virus. As there are not enough tests available, it's unclear how many actual cases there are in the state. As of March 12th, there were 108 confirmed cases. At this time, they are only testing people who have symptoms. In response, the state is encouraging everyone to try and maintain a six foot distance, engage in rigorous handwashing, and avoid public spaces if you are ill.

The projected numbers for this virus place 80% of cases as non-life threatening. 15% will be severe and may require hospitalization. 5% will be critical and could result in permanent medical problems or even death. The most at-risk groups are people over the age of 60 and/or those with chronic health issues like diabetes or high blood pressure.

Mohawk, Hawlemont, and Rowe school districts have closed for two weeks. Colleges are likely to follow suit, which will result in the town's population increasing due to returning students. The Camp and Conference Center have also closed through the end of March. Ms. Litchfield informed everyone that this virus has now progressed to community spreading, meaning an individual no longer has to be linked to travel or an infected person to be at risk.

Chair Rice wants to send out a robocall to the residents explaining the situation, which Chair Sokol will prepare. Her goal is to avoid panic in the community while providing as much accurate information as possible. She has ordered that town buildings be closed for two weeks beginning Monday and after that the situation will be reexamined. Selectman Silva asked if this was too soon to close everything, but Chair Sokol replied that Italy (a country hit very seriously by this virus) was in a similar situation only two weeks ago.

At this point, town buildings will be closed. The transfer station will remain open but the swap shed will be closed and people will be discouraged from congregating. The library may remain open to staff to get items for patrons, but the public will not be allowed in. Chair Rice feels that the distance between staff at town hall is sufficient for the time being to allow continued operation.

Park Commissioner Laurie Pike asked about employees that will be unable to come to work. For example, with the fitness center being closed, there will be no reason for the fitness attendant to come into work. It was agreed that the few employees that will be prevented from working may still be paid for the time being. This topic will be revisited for other part-time employees and full-time employees should the situation arise.

Departure: Everyone was thanked for attending, and all but Joanne Semanie left the meeting at 5:23.

FY2021 Budget: The Board asked Mr. McLatchy (who is a member of the Finance Committee) about their ongoing discussion with the budget. He informed them that at this time the Finance Committee is not recommending the additional personnel for the Fire Department, and that there are concerns about the increase to the police chief's line.

The chief is currently employed as a stipended employee based on *approximately* eighteen hours a week of work. There has been a request to elevate this position to twenty hours a week to make it eligible for retirement. However, at the request of a selectman in December, time sheets were pulled for a year which showed that the chief has only been working on average thirteen hours a week. As this could be a result of incomplete reporting rather than a lack of work, the Finance Committee wanted the Board to respond before making a recommendation. Selectman Silva said he would still like to pursue the twenty hours per week, but perhaps come up with a plan for more accurate timekeeping.

Treasurer: A list of concerns and problems involving the treasurer was presented by Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau and Administrative Assistant Paul McLatchy III. This list involved timelines of matters that they felt were not being handled appropriately, expediently, and/or at all. This list is not a formal complaint against the treasurer, but merely information to explain their concerns.

Mr. McLatchy made a statement where he tried to express his and Ms. Boudreau's frustration with the situation, making it clear that this was neither a matter of personality nor an attempt to have Treasurer Cooper reprimanded/terminated. It was to document that there have been issues and that, in his opinion, prior concerns had been inadequately addressed or dismissed altogether.

Selectman Silva opined that the Board has perhaps failed in this area and that things may have gone too far without action. He would like to try and help Treasurer Cooper excel at her job and give her every opportunity to do it well, but was open to all options to make sure the town work was done.

After brief discussion, it was agreed that an executive session would be scheduled to speak with Treasurer Cooper about her performance and see what can be done to improve moving forward. Though this is not being held as a disciplinary meeting or in response to a complaint, an executive session is required when it involves professional conduct of an employee. He will reach out to Treasurer Cooper to find an agreeable time to meet, preferably in person.

Police Cruiser: A community member observed the town cruiser being used out of town for a police detail. While a ten percent fee is paid for during detail for use of equipment, it's paid to the town that the detail takes place in, not necessarily the town that provides the personnel or vehicle. Selectman Silva asked what the second (old) cruiser is being used for, as we continue to spend money on insurance, fuel, maintenance, etc. He asked whether the town needs two cruisers. Chair Sokol explained that during the last budget season the

Finance Committee supported a new cruiser only because it would be a temporary expansion, not a permanent one, and that no substantial funding would be invested in its upkeep. Though no vote was taken, it was agreed that the police department may use the old cruiser for details out of town, but not the new one.

Generator Maintenance: Selectman Silva inquired as to whether or not the school's generator was covered by the town's annual maintenance contract. Mr. McLatchy will ask Executive Secretary Boudreau on Monday and let both the Board and the School Committee know.

Annual Report: The members reviewed the draft annual report composed primarily by Executive Secretary Boudreau. They approved it as presented.

Town Handbook: Members reviewed the response from town counsel regarding proposed personnel changes.

MOTION TO APPROVE: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to incorporate the changes as suggested by town counsel. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

Town Administrator: At the request of the Selectmen, the administrative staff drafted two job descriptions for a town administrator and an assistant town administrator/assistant treasurer. Selectman Silva said he would like to see this position become a more permanent individual and not shifting with the change in Board membership. An administrator may be appointed for a one or three year term based on state law.

Chair Sokol stated that the position will likely be advertised. Though funding will not be available until July 1st, most of the work in finding someone should be in place or completed. Selectman Silva said that whoever is chosen will need the backing and support of the Board. Members will review the job descriptions before the next meeting.

Roads & Bylaws: Bylaw Review Committee member and police officer Christopher Hyytinen explained the need for a bylaw to enforce the closure of dirt roads during mud season. Tunnel Road recently had extremely heavy equipment go over the road. He showed pictures from his phone of the deep ruts left by these vehicles, but lamented that he had no way to cite them as the town has nothing on its books.

Election Appointment: A request was made for the Board to appoint Lauren Werner as an election teller.

MOTION TO APPOINT: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to appoint Lauren Werner as an election teller. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

Shoveling: At the request of the Board, Mr. McLatchy developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for shoveling services for next year. This service will cover residents under the age of 60 who may not be able to shovel their property due to illness or physical handicap. It was agreed that the Board would request \$1,000 for this program for FY2021.

MOTION TO APPROVE: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to approve the RFP for snow shoveling as written. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

Town Counsel: Town counsel has asked if the Board would like someone to be present at the annual town meeting. The Board answered that they would.

Next Meeting: The Board did not set a date or time for the next meeting.

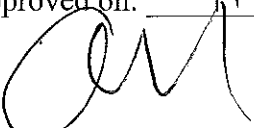
Adjourn: With no further business to attend to:

MOTION TO ADJOURN: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to adjourn at 6:43. The vote was unanimous (2-0-0) in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul McLatchy III

Administrative Assistant to the Boards

Approved on: 4/9/2020


Charles Sokol, Chairman



Edward Silva, Selectman

Contracts/Agreements/Documents Requiring

Signature:

- Tax Map Maintenance Proposal
- Agreement by and Between the Town of Rowe and FRCOG re: MVP Planning Process
- DEP and the Town of Rowe re: Sustainable Materials Recovery Program Grant
- Purchase Recycled Products Policy Update
- FY 21 FRCOG Fuel Bids

Attachments:

Documents:

- Agenda 03/13/20
- Draft Minutes of 02/13/20
- Draft Agenda – Town Emergency Planning in Response to the Coronavirus Threat
- Municipal Coop Checklist
- Emergency List Town Personnel
- NBSU Memo: Re: School Functions, Trips & Activities
- Wage Comparison: COLA to \$0.75 Town Employees
- Rowe Town Clerk re: Pay Reduction
- Budget: General Administration Detail
- Personnel Policy Manual Rev. 2020 DRAFT
- Executive Secretary Letter to Board of Selectmen re: Administrative Positions
- Town Organization 2007
- Town Organization DRAFT update
- Job Description – Draft Town Administrator
- Job Description – Draft Assistant Town Administrator
- RFP Shoveling Service Program

Mail:

- Dept. of Fish & Game re: Map 408 Lot 33
- Dept. of Fish & Game re: Map 408 Lot 34
- DCR re: National Flood Insurance Program